

THE SOCIAL ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMUNITY

593 have to go to the fields they should not accompany each other, but should follow one after the other to avoid the effects of the evil eye. It is not considered 'polite' for married brothers to sit together at one meeting. Moreover, there is no joking relationship or greeting terms between brothers.

The relationship between sisters is mainly based on affection and mutual co-operation, but not necessarily that of solidarity as they are destined to live in separate homes after marriage. The same pattern of relationship obtains between brothers and sisters although married brothers are socially responsible for their unmarried sisters. In the case of the sister's divorce, her brother is the guardian in the absence of the father. More often than not, a widowed woman who has no sons, goes to live with her brother, and hands over to him her property that she inherited from their father.

595 The relation between consanguine brothers and sisters is supposed to be bristling with friction and jealousy. Though they are from the same father and carry his name, their mothers are called 'darra'-rivals; and hence they identify themselves with their mothers from the emotional point of view. Solidarity between consanguine brothers is not structurally expected as they are not nursed from the same breast. Uterine brothers are expected to be more affable and less quarrelsome with each other. This difference is partly intelligible when it is known that consanguine brothers inherit land and property from their father, while uterine brothers are 'screened' and do not inherit anything from the stepfather. However, whether between half-brothers or full brothers, the expectation of friction between siblings is widely held, and does actually occur, and is usually explained as an expression of their jealousy and rivalry. Apart from the motive of sibling rivalry to which reference will be made later, this friction between siblings could also be attributed to the absolute authority of the father. Jealousy of, and rivalry for the father's power, is suppressed and made acceptable by the possibility of gaining rewards of good behaviour both on social and religious grounds. Hence the father-son conflict is displaced to the brothers and sisters, who are in open rivalry for the father's favour and his sanctions and rewards. Moreover the methods of their early training, as will be discussed later, do not contribute to the suppression of rivalry; on the contrary, they stimulate and emphasize the value of rivalry in social behaviour.¹

● 604 The relation between a boy and a girl and his or her paternal or maternal uncle reflects almost the same relationship pattern that obtains between children and their father and mother. The paternal uncle and aunt are expected to support the father in enforcing discipline and social sanctions. It is even said that the main responsibility in this respect lies on the uncle's shoulders, as the father might be inclined to be less firm, having particular love for his children. On the other hand, the maternal uncle and aunt are also the source of affection and pampering. Grown-ups can sit

¹ This explanation is based on a similar situation in the Tanala culture of Madagascar. Cf. Abram Kardiner, *The Individual and his Society*, pp. 315-16.

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with ease in the same gathering with their maternal uncles, but not with their paternal uncles. The relations between paternal and maternal cousins fall in the same line with that of the father's or mother's side.

One of the most salient features that underlies the structural relationships is that although the fabric forming the ideological basis for the social structure is entirely patrilineal as far as descent, inheritance, and prestige are concerned, yet it is dyed in a sentimental and emotional colouring which is preponderantly matrilineal. Towards the close matrilineal kin, the relations are certainly not weaker than towards the close patrilineal kin; they are of a different kind. If the relation of the 'ego' towards the patrilineal side is one of apprehension and alertness, and businesslike, as it were, the relation to the affinal side is one of affection, ease and jesting. It is not unusual for a sister who asks her brother for help to address him as 'Son of my mother' as a means of enlisting his sympathy; or for a brother, on going to visit his sister, to say 'I am going to see "my mother's daughter"'. Some men, whose mothers are of forceful character or whose fathers were married to other wives, are publicly called by their first names followed by their mother's first names. A man or a woman relates himself or herself always to the mother in situations of charm-writing, of incantations to ward off the evil eye or in similar magic rituals. In invoking God's help, women relate the person for whom they are praying to his mother, as this is considered the most genuine and moving way of appealing to God. This could be regarded as further evidence for the emphasis on the matrilineal sentiment in the social structure. In the case of a man or a woman referred directly to his or her mother, this could also be regarded as a functionally convenient way of distinguishing between him or her and the paternal half-brothers or half-sisters. The reference to the matrilineal origin in a polygamous patrilineal society seems to be a device used to distinguish between agnates.¹ Moreover, what Firth has written about the role of the mother's brother in a segmentary system of patrilineal type, applies to Silwa community. In this village, the khal or khala, or the maternal side in general, provides certain compensatory social functions to those provided by the father and the paternal side. The former side provides, as Firth put it, 'a locus of attachment and refuge for the children of the women by contrast with the demands laid upon them by their father's group'. Again, the recognition of the mother's brother's group as one of special interest provides a channel for large-scale social communication and reciprocity between it and the father's group.² The same applies to the recognition of in-law relationship.³

Such relations and norms governing the relationship between the family

¹ E. L. Peters in his review of Hilma Granqvist, 'Child Problems among the Arabs' in *Man*, Vol. LI, September 1951, p. 126.

² Raymond Firth in his review of M. Fortes, 'The Web of Kinship' in *Africa*, Vol. XXI, April, 1951, p. 139.

³ For kinship terms in Silwa, see Appendix IV, 'A Note on Kinship Terms'.

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593 Another dispute between two brothers was where the younger accused the older of being a spendthrift, and in his extravagance, mainly due to his wife, he 'spoilt' the reputation of the family by borrowing from other people though he earned more than his younger brother. In spite of the often repeated admonition of the younger, the older brother persisted in his ways. The misunderstanding became acute when both agreed to build a new house, the younger undertaking the expenses of the building, to be paid by his brother for his share, which he had not done. The dispute flared up again when the older brother got his daughter married without consulting the younger brother.

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595 Another dispute which has been dragging on for a considerable time is that over the office of 'Omda'. For the last fifty years the office had been in one family. The death of the previous Omda started the strife between his sons from different mothers. He had six children from one wife and five from another. During his lifetime, the two houses united in service and respect for the father in spite of the seamy side of relationship. Immediately he died ten years ago, the suppressed rivalries and jealousies flared up. The sons disagreed as to who was to be elected for the office. An Arab council met and decided to put up the second son from the first wife (as the first son was illiterate).¹ The other house had to submit to the decisions of the council; yet the rivalry never died down, and the brothers from the other house still waited their chance. After devious intrigues, the Omda was suspended for corrupt conduct related to the system of rationing. After the lengthy court procedures which took almost a whole year, he was found not guilty. The time for filling the vacant post of Omda came, and the deposed Omda as well as the eldest brother of the other house entered their names officially as candidates. It is interesting to note that the three surviving uncles of the two candidates were with the new one.

604 One of the main reasons for their not supporting the deposed Omda was that he did not treat them as paternal uncles as they expected him to do. Moreover, on certain occasions he insisted that they should stand for him, as they used to do for his father—an attitude they resented. On the election day both the candidates went to the 'Mudeeriah' in Aswan, followed by dozens of their supporters. The new candidate gained the office this time; thereupon, the other house started their intrigues to depose him.

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593 A mother quarrelled with her son because he did not give her as much attention and economic support as he did his wife. The son had to leave the village and took a domestic job in Cairo. The mother sued her son in the court because he did not support her in old age while he was earning money. Indeed a great deal of discord occurs as a result of the conflicts between the loyalties and obligations towards 'the family of orientation' and 'the conjugal family' and the in-law relatives. It is often said that the newly married person has two minds, to denote the

¹ After the death of an Omda his sons are usually considered for succession; in fact, the Omda's sons, even during his lifetime, are addressed as Omdas.

THE AIMS AND METHODS OF SOCIALIZATION IN SILWA

867 In this way the child experiences the processes of kinship, entering gradually widening circles of people with concomitant responsibilities and meanings. About the age of seven, for instance, kinship sentiment means running errands for close relatives, borrowing things, helping in carrying presents and gifts for them, and so forth. A child runs errands for his paternal and maternal uncles and grandfathers whether they live with the father or not, whether they are on good terms or not. Beyond these categories of kinship, the child is not compelled to run errands for other relatives who are not in harmony with his parents, on pain of punishment. Through the disciplinary powers of the uncle and the parent's family in general, the child finds himself more drawn towards his mother's people whom he usually goes to visit with his mother, because, as mentioned earlier, he finds them less censorious than paternal relatives. These visits to the maternal relatives are more frequent in the case of adolescent boys who can enjoy a relaxing and more genial relationship in their leisure time at night. As they grow older, kinship for boys and girls means help and assistance in ceremonial events of the extended family and the clan. It is significant to notice that children use only eight terms of address: [603] father, mother, grandfather, grandmother, paternal and maternal uncle [604] and aunt. The last four categories of uncle and aunt are only used when those addressed are married; otherwise they are addressed merely by their first names. In Silwa, unlike many other rural areas in the province of Kena, boys and girls tend, on the whole, to drop these four categories of kinship address after their marriage and usually call their uncles and aunts by their first names. It seems that after marriage boys and girls attain a certain amount of social independence, and thus they do not address [603] uncles and aunts by kinship titles in the same way as they do not address [604] the latter if they are not married, or if the age difference is slight. The recognition of blood relation, however, is usually used as a test for young children by their elders: one might hear an elder questioning a younger, "Who is your uncle? Who is your cousin? Where do they live? Whom do you prefer?" and so on. The adolescents have a few puzzles depending on kinship terms, and division of inheritance, the solution of which lies in the understanding of a linguistic twist, or a pun.¹

The child's recognition of the importance of his family and his identification with it is acquired at a very early stage of his development. The child usually talks in the first person plural, by saying 'our donkey, our camel'. [195] In fact, it is preferable to use the plural pronoun rather than the singular, as it is considered to be modest and less presumptuous. This identification with the family is also evidenced by the fact that in children's swearing, and in that of the adults for that matter, the curse is directed towards the father, the mother, the family, or to one's origin (seed). It is very seldom indeed that a curse refers directly to the child or the person addressed. When children are praised by visitors, such praise is couched in terms such

¹ See Appendix VII for boys' riddles.